

"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all
flesh come." (Psa. 65:2.)

- TEACH ME TO PRAY -

"I often say my prayers
But do I always pray?
Or do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?

I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.

For words without the heart
The Lord will never hear,
Nor will He to that child attend
Whose prayers are not sincere.

Lord, show me what I need
And teach me HOW to pray,
And help me when I seek Thy grace
To MEAN the words I say."

- Clifford Lewis

NOTE:

THE BOOK OF FIRST SAMUEL

"How To Pray"

1 Samuel 1:9-19

Introduction

1. How to pray is often not as important an inquiry as just "pray". See Luke 11:1.

2. Prayer is a satisfying experience for troubled hearts. Particularly is this true if one knows "how" to pray.

3. The elements of true prayer which enable one to know something of the "how" of prayer are outlined in the story of Hannah.

1. EMOTION

Several words in the text indicate that Hannah's whole being was involved in her petitioning the Lord. Consider these:

a. Bitterness of soul. v. 10.

This noun is related to the verb which means to embitter or irritate.

b. Soreness of weeping. v. 10.

The cognate accusative accents the idea that there were real tears. Here is the sort of weeping which is made for the dead.

c. Wretchedness of affliction. v. 11.

Here is misery of travail. No lightness of spirit surrounded Hannah. For the same word see Gen. 16:11.

d. Sorrowfulness of spirit. v. 15.

Heaviness of spirit is the idea here. The word is used of vehemency of wind. Cf. Isa. 27:8; 2 Sam. 2:17.

e. Troubleness of feeling. v. 16.

The two words "complaint" (to talk with oneself) and "grief" (provocation) point up the internal feelings of Hannah.

Note: Some may ask, 'Is this the kind of person I must be to pray? You mean this is the "how" of prayer?' It is admitted that some forms of prayer are praise, thanksgiving, and recitations of His faithfulness. But, when one talks about asking God for the supply of his need, there seems to be that depth of personal involvement as displayed here. The Psalms are also full of such examples. The "how" of prayer includes soul preparation!

2. DEDICATION

Submission to the perfect will of God is also a "how" to pray. The advancement of the self, the strengthening of one's ego is hardly a "how" to pray. All must be for Him. Hannah prayed for a "boy" that he might be given to the Lord for:

a. Ministration. v. 11.

The idea of service unto the Lord all his days notes service unto God. Suggests a Levite.

b. Separation. v. 11.

With no razor coming to his head, the idea of a Nazarite vow was connected to him. See. Num. 6.

3. CONVICTION

Let's face it with open hearts: One cannot really be praying properly when he does not manifest earnestness. Note how Hannah gave evidence of this:

a. Inaudibly. v. 13.

Hannah did not concern herself with what people heard; she knew that God knew her heart. If one does not pray with the heart, it is hard to believe he knows the "how" of prayer.

b. Directly.

1) Unto the Lord. v. 10.

This is the Jehovah Who is the covenant-keeping God.

2) Before the Lord. v. 12

She was persuaded that her speech was right in His face!

3) Poured out my soul. v. 15.

The verb for "pour out" was used of pouring out a drink offering. She did this right in His face!

4) Asked of Him. v. 17.

No double thinking here. She was in touch with the Sovereign God.

Conclusion

There is no way to provide a trick formula for prayer. But one can certainly read the inspired Word and get some ideas as to how it is done. Praying like Hannah will produce results. It did for her:

a. She was changed. v. 18.

b. Her husband was changed. v. 19.

c. The Lord had dealt with her. v. 19.

What more could be expected or desired? Blessed be the Name of the Lord. The Word is eminently true: